

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

EDWARD M. FEATHERSTONE

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Thomas Dunnigan speaking on September 20, 1999. Today I will be talking with Edward Featherstone, who spent more than 30 years dealing with foreign affairs as a Foreign Service officer, with a particular emphasis on Japan.

Ed, why don't we begin by your telling me something about your background and education, your military service and what interested you in the Foreign Service.

FEATHERSTONE: I was born in New York City in 1935. I started school there. My father was a lawyer, at the time. When World War II started, my father went overseas and we moved back to our ancestral home, which is in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, up in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania. I was more or less raised there after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania in 1958. I had a military service requirement, of course, as most of us did in those years. I spent my time in the United States Army. I took ROTC in college and in high school. I was commissioned as an officer and I served in the 82nd Airborne Division for almost three half years.

Q: The 82nd is always the first one into action, it seems, when we get into trouble.

FEATHERSTONE: I was lucky, by virtue of when I was born. I didn't have to go to war. I came close to it once or twice, but I never had to go. I always had an interest in international affairs, when I was growing up and during my time at the University of Pennsylvania, where I had taken courses in it. Of course, my father was involved in international affairs, in a way, because he was a defense counsel for the war crimes trials. He defended Japanese accused of war crimes. He did this for about eight or nine years, counting the final legal reviews and so forth. I attended a number of his trials, including some fairly dramatic ones. But, anyway, I became interested in legal affairs to some extent, but also in international affairs, particularly those pertaining to Japan. After I graduated from college and completed my military service, I thought perhaps the most interesting course I could pursue would be to go into the Foreign Service. I talked with some people about this and eventually obtained the necessary documentation to take the Foreign Service examination. I did so in December 1959 and came into the Foreign Service in 1961.

My first posting was to Japan at the American consulate general in Kobe-Osaka. Then I was posted to the Language School in Yokohama for continuation of language training, which I had started at FSI [Foreign Service Institute]/Washington.

Q: When you were in your initial training back here, had you requested an assignment to Japan, or was this just out of the blue?

FEATHERSTONE: No, I had requested an assignment to Japan. I had been slated for Japanese language training, under Eleanor Jordan, who was the chief linguist, and I believe at that time, she was head of FSI. I spent about eight months with her. Then, I went out to Japan to Kobe. I was a vice consul in Kobe, Japan, from 1962 to 1964.

Q: Who was the consul general there?

FEATHERSTONE: The consul general at the time was a man named Robert (Bob) Chalker. Later on, it was Owen Zurhellen, who is long dead, of course. He was a wonderful man. Anyway, before Owen, there was a person who was not a Japan type. Owen was a longtime Japan man. I knew Owen very well. In fact, I knew Owen when I was a child, in Kamakura where I was raised, a city on the seashore of Japan. Owen was, at that time, a vice-consul, I suppose. We went to Mass at the same Japanese church. So, I knew Owen well.

Q: How large was the consulate when you were in Kobe?

FEATHERSTONE: In Kobe, we had about 12 Japanese employees, and four or five Americans.

Q: Did we have a branch off of Osaka, or was it all...?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, we did. It was split. We had the American consul general, Kobe-Osaka. We had an office in Osaka and an office in Kobe. The consulate general spent two days a week, I believe, in Osaka and three in Kobe. Later on, of course, Kobe was demolished. It all became American Consulate General, Osaka. At the time, I was very fortunate because Kobe was a very nice city, first of all, and second of all, it was nicer to be farther from the embassy.

Q: What were you doing?

FEATHERSTONE: I was the vice consul. I did the typical consular work. Everyone started in consular work when I was a young officer. I issued visas, and was engaged in protection and welfare of American citizens, people who had been arrested or had difficulties, or were sick or had died. I dealt with that. People always decry consular work, but I thought it was some of the most interesting work I have ever done. The only dead people I had seen, for example, were in McLaughlin's Funeral Home in my hometown of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. A couple of cases that I had included one case where a man was in an airplane that had and crashed and burned. I had to pick him up. It was one of those things where they pull out the tray and I said, "Yeah, that's him. You can close it now." Anyway, I thought consular work was really interesting. The only thing that kept me from not making a career of it was I didn't care too much for my peers in consular work. I gravitated more toward Owen Zurhellen and the people who ran the political and economic side.

Q: Did you have any opportunity to do any reporting?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, I wrote some pieces. I don't know how important they were. I think they were more for my edification than for the department. We had air grams at the time. I wrote probably a dozen air grams, a few cables. Now and then I would write a

cable, mostly on consular affairs, usually debts or something that was fairly unimportant and timely, and that sort of thing. I enjoyed myself. I had a good time there. I loved Kobe.

Q: Were there any U.S. military in your area?

FEATHERSTONE: Not too many. When I was at the embassy in Tokyo, we had a few dealings with the U.S. military that were mostly in places like Yokosuka, which was about an hour's drive. It was a large navy base, and still is. We used to go down there occasionally. I didn't have all that much to do with it, but sometimes, I would have to go down there on a consular matter. I usually did this by train, which was the easiest way to travel in Japan. I went down there and talked to one officer or another about whatever matter we were faced with.

Q: Were there any Communists demonstrations against the consulate?

FEATHERSTONE: Oh yes. We had those regularly. I don't know about the term "Communist," but they were certainly leftists. In some cases, they were anti-American. They were always anti-American. It was usually anti-A bomb, or some policy that we were pursuing at the time. Usually the people were fairly polite. There was one case, I recall, where they had a demonstration, and they had a thing they were carrying, which had some play cards and so forth on it. They knocked against the consulate and they knocked off a lantern like thing we had. The next day they came around with compensation. Even though they were against us in a way, they were decent fellows.

Q: Were you there when Attorney General Robert Kennedy visited the area?

FEATHERSTONE: I was there, but I was not involved with the visit, other than being acutely aware of it and so forth. I think I may have had a minor role in carrying papers around. I was not directly involved in it.

Q: What was the reaction to the assassination to President Kennedy?

FEATHERSTONE: A great shock. The Japanese thought a great deal of Kennedy because of his youth and his energy. He was a rather dramatic figure to them. Japan is a country that has complete gun control. There are no pistols allowed. You can have a firearm for hunting, but there are no pistols allowed. So, it was quite a shock to them. I think we had a ceremony, a Mass, I believe for his death and a lot of people came to it. There were a lot of Japanese people who came. It had quite an effect on them.

Q: Did the ambassador visit from Tokyo very often?

FEATHERSTONE: Not very often, no. He came down once or twice while I was there.

Q: It was Ambassador Reischauer.

FEATHERSTONE: Ambassador Reischauer was there. I think he came only once while I was there. I saw him very briefly. I didn't have a lot of contact with him at all. Most of my contact was, of course, with my superiors and people like Owen, who I knew very well. He was also my superior.

Q: In 1964, you were transferred to Tokyo, I believe, for language training?

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. I was transferred to the language school, which was in Yokohama, at the time. I went there for a year of language training. I found that very satisfactory. The teachers were excellent. I don't know how it is now, but the Foreign Service in those days, really did a very good job on language training, the material we used and the people who were the teachers were first-rate, I think.

Q: How many in your class?

FEATHERSTONE: I only had about six in my class. There were three or four FSOs and one or two from USIS. I think we also had somebody from the Department of Commerce in my class. It was a good class. I must say the language training in those days was very well run. The materials were really first-rate.

Q: Did you do any work at the embassy or have any contact with them while you were in this training?

FEATHERSTONE: Not really. I think we went up to the embassy once for an orientation. I didn't have any regular business at the embassy. Maybe when I was in consular work, there was once or twice where I had to go to the embassy for a deposition or something like that, but it wasn't an expected business type of thing. I didn't spend a whole lot of time there. I knew the people. At least I could recognize their faces and so forth.

Q: You were there during the 1964 Olympics?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, I was.

Q: What effect did that have in Japan?

FEATHERSTONE: Well, I think it was a catharsis for Japan, an emergence from the occupation, and from the war, and everything that had gone on. It was a tremendously successful Olympics, which I attended. My wife and I got lucky and got tickets for about four or five events. We did go to them at the time. I had a very good time. It was a real watermark for the Japanese. It was sort of the coming-out of occupation and going back to normalcy for them. It was quite a time.

Q: Well, at the end of your language training, you were moved to Niigata, I understand, on the other side of Japan.

FEATHERSTONE: I did go to Niigata, but first I spent a year (1965-1966) at the embassy in Tokyo. It was sort of a fluke that I was assigned to the USIS post at Niigata. The only reason I got the job is, I sat next to a chief of USIS, at the ambassador's staff meeting. I was the ambassador's staff aide. The USIS chief told me he had this fellow coming in who was some kind of a hippie. He was dope smoking, and a no-goodnik, in his opinion. I don't really know what he was like.

Q: In 1960s, could have been.

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. He didn't want this guy. Apparently, he investigated it. The only way he could avoid taking him was to get somebody onboard who was already in the country. He turned to me at the meeting and said, "Featherstone, do you want to go to Niigata?" I said, "Well, why not?" He arranged it, and I went to Niigata. He didn't have to take Mr. pot smoker. My wife and I went up there. Probably, out of all the tours we had, it was the most enjoyable.

Q: You were Director of the American Cultural Center?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes.

Q: That was quite a possibility for a young officer.

FEATHERSTONE: Well, we had about eight or nine cultural centers at the time. We had one in Sendai, one in Niigata, one in Hiroshima. Later on, of course, when the budget thing got bad, we closed all these. I don't think we have anything now to speak of, except the consulate, I suppose. In those days, we had cultural centers. Indeed, I had a budget. I had about five employees. I had a little van, and we used to drive around to give talks. I would arrange shows on American art work and so forth. Actually, it was one of the best tours I ever had.

Q: Were any other countries represented in Niigata?

FEATHERSTONE: Niigata, no. There were no others. We had visitors occasionally from the embassy. Occasionally, we would get other foreign people, diplomats from other countries. There were none stationed there.

Q: Did you do the usual thing? Did you have a library?

FEATHERSTONE: We had a library. We had books. As a matter of fact, I remember one case with Russians. There were a lot of Russians there because Niigata is a port city and a lot of ships came from to the Soviet Union. They used to come into Niigata to go shopping. You couldn't buy anything in the Soviet Union. They came in all the time. They came into my cultural center one time and wanted to know if they could borrow some books. I gave them Milovan Djilas and all sorts of things. I figured this was probably a really good opportunity to get with these people. I gave these books away. Later on, I got some flack for it. Eventually, my boss took care of them.

Q: Did you do such things as teach English there?

FEATHERSTONE: No. My wife taught some English, but we really didn't do any English teaching. It was set up for English teachers. We could get people in touch with English teachers and what not, but we didn't do any of it ourselves.

Q: How about reporting. Did you do any reporting, because you were in a unique spot out there?

FEATHERSTONE: Not much. I used to write occasionally, if we had big things, like an earthquake, or some kind of fire or a big scandal of some sort. I would write a monthly letter to the consulate general or to my superior. I used to jot things down and write to him, but it would be a stretch to call it reporting, I think.

Q: You must have had a chance to perfect your language skill out there too?

FEATHERSTONE: I did. There was virtually no one who spoke English. Well, there were a few academic types who spoke English, but almost all the people I dealt with were Japanese. It was a good opportunity to learn the language.

Q: What was the local reaction to our involvement in Vietnam?

FEATHERSTONE: It was overwhelmingly negative. The Japanese, for the most part, thought it was foolish. They thought we were getting into something that we would regret, which turned out to be the case, indeed. They had also been involved in southeast Asia for many years in many different ways. They were of the view that we would come to grief and they failed to understand what our interest in being there. When I say it was negative, we had some demonstrations and some protests. But, it was not ugly.

Q: Nothing violent.

FEATHERSTONE: No, nothing violent. We had people send us letters and occasionally there would be people who would demonstrate holding placards around the cultural center. But, we had no real trouble.

Q: Was Communist influence noticeable in Niigata?

FEATHERSTONE: There certainly was Communist influence. I won't say it was a hot bed of Communism, or anything like that, but we had unions who were very leftist. Their propensity was to side with the people against us, whoever that happened to be, whether it was the Russians or whomever. We had no trouble with it, but you had to be aware of it at all times.

Q: Any Red Chinese or North Korea presence or influence out in that region?

FEATHERSTONE: I guess there was but we didn't come in contact with them at all. Occasionally, there would be a Chinese visit, but they usually were going to Tokyo or someplace like that. It didn't affect us much, where we were.

Q: Did the ambassador visit? I think it was Alex Johnson then, wasn't it?

FEATHERSTONE: Alex Johnson came down several times while I was the director of the cultural center. Of course, Alex Johnson is an old Japan hand. He knew people and spent time there. In fact, he had been there, I believe, before the war.

Q: He has. In his biography, he talks about that. Any U.S. military bases in the area there?

FEATHERSTONE: Not in the Niigata area, but there are many in the Tokyo area. The largest naval base in the world is at Yokosuka, Japan. It is the largest U.S. naval base. That is still the case, as a matter of fact. It has the largest dry dock in the world. The Japanese built it for the Imperial Navy. Somebody knew what they were doing back then. We didn't bomb any of that stuff. We have used them in about five wars since then. I was always amazed. We always think that Americans aren't very forward looking, in the sense that we aren't anticipating what is going to come up. But, somebody had done that all right.

Q: Was there much criticism in Niigata about the Japanese security relationship with the U.S.? It was getting stronger at that time.

FEATHERSTONE: Right. Leftist agitators, of course, were very strongly opposed to that. At demonstrations, they would come to protest the cultural center. They would drop their letters or whatever they had to tell us. They were always reasonably polite. There was no unpleasantness about it. There was a heavy communist element in all this, and still is. Some of the labor unions in Japan are very leftist. Communist may be going a bit far, but they are certainly quite leftist.

Q: How about our racial policies? Were you attacked in that regard?

FEATHERSTONE: No, I never was. I don't think that ever came up. A lot of Asian Americans served, from Hawaii and what not. The Japanese are racists themselves. They look down on anyone who is darker than they. They treated people like Eurasians and others when they occupied them, very badly. The Japanese are not real keen on opposing racism. I don't think in their heart they do oppose it.

Q: Well, at the end of this tour, which seems to have been a very pleasant one, you went to Okinawa. Did you ask for that or did that just happen?

FEATHERSTONE: They offered it to me. I think maybe it was Owen, I can't really remember, but they had this job opening. In Okinawa, the big issue then was we were holding it, and Japan wanted it back. We were holding it for good reason. We had

strategic interests there. It was weighing very heavily on us, though. This was in the height of the Cold War. We had a situation whereby the Japanese wanted Okinawa returned to Japan and the U.S. wanted to retain all of its bases in Okinawa.

Q: Well, they got reversion.

FEATHERSTONE: The thing about the reversion of Okinawa was the Japanese wanted Okinawa back, in essence. We wanted to keep it. In fact, we wanted to keep it for a number of good reasons. This was a major issue during the entire time I was there, as to what we would do. The United States' key military people wanted to keep Okinawa and wanted to keep it as long as possible. Of course, The State Department had determined that it would be injurious to our interest if we got into a situation where the Japanese got angry at us or very dissatisfied with this whole thing or the Okinawan people themselves wanted Okinawa returned to Japan. They would have rather been under Japan than under us. It was a very peculiar situation. The Okinawans hate the Japanese. Here they were, in a situation where they wanted to go back to Japan, but I believe their reasons for wanting to go back were more economic than anything else. The Japanese could provide much more aid, and, of course, they spoke the same language. They were easier to deal with and so forth. I think these were the reasons that motivated them, more than anything else. There was no question, the Japanese wanted to have Okinawa revert to their control.

Q: What would you say Okinawa's status in international law was at the time?

FEATHERSTONE: There was no question that it was under the authority of the United States of America. We controlled it. I don't think the Japanese questioned that. They questioned whether we should keep it as long as we were, but I don't think there was any doubt that they knew we controlled it, legally and any other way. Of course, we used it. We had all kinds of stuff, including nukes in Okinawa at the time. We had a huge armament situation there. We had airfields. I believe Kadena was the largest airfield in the world where B-52 bombers took off during the Vietnam War. All this would have vastly complicated our military situation if we had to revert Okinawa.

Q: What was your job title in those days in Okinawa? You weren't vice consul anymore.

FEATHERSTONE: I wasn't vice consul anymore. I was an officer with USCAR [U.S. Civil Administration of the Ryukyus].

Q: Were you a political advisor?

FEATHERSTONE: No, I wasn't a political advisor. I was with the U.S. Civil Administration in the Ryukyu Islands, what they called USCAR. I was simply a USCAR officer, I guess you could say. We had the civil administrator, who at that time was Stanley Carpenter.

Q: Oh, Stan. I know Stan.

FEATHERSTONE: He was the civil administrator. I worked for Stan, actually. It was exciting, I must say. For all the problems we had, and the tensions with the Japanese, it was an exciting place to be. We were doing things, and we wrote reports that really made an impact.

Q: Were your reports sent to Tokyo or to the department, or to both?

FEATHERSTONE: Well, they were mostly in the form of cables. They did go to Tokyo, of course. We sent them to other places as well. Sometimes, for various reasons, it was cut-off. On the whole, I thought it was a very exciting time. We were trying to work toward convincing the armed forces of the United States that reverting Japan back to Okinawa would be a good thing. In the last part of this, I worked directly for the commanding general of Okinawa. At that time, it was a man named James B. Lampert. He was a three-star U.S. general. I think his last job before coming to Okinawa was as the commandant at West Point. He was, in fact, a West Pointer himself. But, General Lampert was quite a perceptive fellow and good to deal with. It was a little dicey for me, because of course I had to take care of his interests, while at the same time, take care of the Department of State's interest, pushing for reversion. I found him to be very understanding. I had a great deal of respect for him. He is now dead, God rest his soul.

Q: As is Stan Carpenter.

FEATHERSTONE: As is Stan Carpenter.

Q: Well, while you were there, they had their first election, I believe, the first one after the war. They elected a socialist, as chief executive. Were we surprised, first of all?

FEATHERSTONE: No, not terribly. We anticipated that he was probably going to be elected. It didn't matter all that much. The United States forces continued control over Okinawa. Whoever the chief executive was, he couldn't do much more than cause some trouble with us, by hosting demonstrations, or fomenting them and so forth.

Q: Of which, there were a number, I guess.

FEATHERSTONE: Of which there were a number. But, they were never violent. Beyond putting up with them, there was no real trouble. The man's name was Yara. He was an educator, basically. He became the chief executive. He was a decent fellow. I met with him a lot of times. I met with General Lampert regularly. I would be the translator. I should say that they had a man named George Sankey there, who was a Japanese American. He did the translating and I did the writing up of the report. I did the cable that went out. It was an exciting time, and I certainly enjoyed it.

Q: Did you get involved in the labor grievances at the bases there? I gather there were a number of those.

FEATHERSTONE: There were a number of those. Peripherally, I did, yes. We had a

labor section. They had about four or five people in it. They did most of the labor work. Of course, it impinged on our area too, because what labor did affected the political situation, with regards our bases. I maintained a fairly close liaison and I had a lot to do with the labor people. Occasionally, I had disagreements with them. I wanted to further with regards to giving the Japanese more leeway. They wanted to be more restrictive, so we sometimes had conflicts there. Well, not conflicts, but disagreements. I will say that most of the time the Civil Administration won.

Q: There was a problem with nerve gas munitions too, I gather.

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, I wasn't too much involved with that, Tom. But, we had nerve gas as well as nukes on Okinawa. This, of course, was unknown to the Japanese, at least officially, although some had suspicions, I suppose. The actual taking out of the nerve gas from Okinawa happened after I left. So, I wasn't involved in that other than I sort of anticipated the issue as it was to come up. I myself was not involved.

Q: Well, after eight years abroad, you were brought back to the Department, I gather, in 1970.

FEATHERSTONE: Right. I came back and I worked at the Department of Political Military Affairs. I worked for Christian Chapman.

Q: Oh yes. I know Chris.

FEATHERSTONE: He is a nice fellow. I worked in there, mostly with military sales and loans of military equipment, of various sorts. These were airplanes, ships, and so forth.

Q: I remember being overseas and we were pushing the F-15 and the S-16 and things like that. I presume you were in on some of those.

FEATHERSTONE: I didn't get in too much with the business of pushing airplane sales, and things like that. In fact, it was mostly the reverse with us. They had various countries who wanted to buy things. For one reason or another, we didn't want them to have it. So, it was mostly in the way of damping down stuff like that than encouraging sales. But, it was an interesting job. Besides Chris Chapman, there was Bill Lewis. I don't know whether you know Bill.

Q: No, not well.

FEATHERSTONE: He was one of the other officers there. I worked with them pretty closely. Chris was sometimes difficult to work with. As a result, I often went to Bill Lewis, rather than to Chris. Anyway, it was an interesting job and I enjoyed myself there.

Q: Did you have to work closely with the Pentagon?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, in some respects, but I wasn't over there all the time. I used to

go over once or twice every month. I would see various people there, mostly in the military sales and equipment area.

Q: How about the Geographic Bureau within the Department. Did you have differences with them on sales?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, with some of the Latin American things. Their people would want to buy F-15s or whatever you had. Then, we wouldn't want to sell them. We would have to explain why. It would go around and around like that. But, we in military equipment sales had the hammer, so to speak, so we were able to keep it under control.

Q: Did you get to travel in this job?

FEATHERSTONE: Not much. I didn't do a whole lot of traveling. Ron Spiers sent me to one of the army bases, or maybe it was an air force base one time, for some reason. I think it was to find out how the air force did something or another that we were thinking of doing. Except for fairly local stuff like that, I didn't do a whole lot of traveling.

Q: Did we do any dealing with the neutral countries? Countries such as Sweden, Switzerland, India, countries like that?

FEATHERSTONE: No. I recall visits by the Premier of India but it wasn't in connection with military sales so much. They were just visits. I was involved on the periphery.

Q: What were your relations with the NATO staff?

FEATHERSTONE: Didn't have much in the way of relations with NATO. That was mostly another office that had that.

Q: All right. How about with Congress?

FEATHERSTONE: Congress, we had quite a lot to do. There were all kinds of amendments then that you had. You couldn't sell weapons of this type. We always had to either get around that or you could issue what is called Presidential Determination (PD). The PD would allow the president to waive the act, for instance, that says you can't sell these weapons to this country, or something like that. My office would be the one that would decide whether we should push for sales of this or that or the other thing. It was a question of American commercial advantage. If we didn't sell a weapon, the Swedes would, or somebody else would. You would wind up not getting the sale, and losing the weapon too. Often, we did approve such sales. I thought as a practical matter, it only made sense to me. I didn't get terribly caught up in selling weapons of mass destruction to people because they would hurt somebody. I don't give a damn. They are going to do that anyway. If they don't buy it from us, they will buy it from somebody else. While Japan doesn't sell that type of weapon, lots of other countries did. I always was of the view that the American stuff is probably better. If we have an American machine gun or American ship, or whatever it might be, we have some control over it. You can get parts

and you have all this other stuff. They have to come to us. I thought it was advantageous for us to have that.

Q: They could always get it from Czechoslovakia in the old days.

FEATHERSTONE: That's true.

Q: Did you have any input from Henry Kissinger when he was at the White House? Did he get into military sales?

FEATHERSTONE: I don't think so, at least not in my area. I never saw Henry the "K." I never dealt with him.

Q: You would have known.

FEATHERSTONE: No question. He was hard to miss.

Q: Well, I know we appointed a coordinator for security assistance, a Mr. Tarr. Did he have any effect on what you were doing?

FEATHERSTONE: Some. I guess that was the first time they had security assistance put into a discreet position like that. It was called T for a long time. I guess, because Tarr was the first guy. He became "T" even though it might be "X" who ran it. I got involved, to some degree, on that. My office sometimes had the perception that they were always trying to get into our business, where they didn't belong. But, we tried to keep our own independence.

Q: Did the Vietnam conflict have much effect on your activities?

FEATHERSTONE: Not directly, certainly. It was a situation where Vietnam was going on. Of course, we were heavily aware of it. It affected our dealings with some other countries in other ways, in that it became more difficult to justify sales, multi-sales for certain people, and so forth. But, Vietnam was going on. There were other aspects such as that, but essentially I didn't have all that much to do with Vietnam.

Q: Did your office have any relations with ACDA?

FEATHERSTONE: I used to have meetings occasionally with the ACDA people. I should say I was involved in meetings. I think Bob Gray was involved at the time.

Q: He was in ACDA.

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. He and I used to get together on various things. It was mostly about weaponry or who should have authority, who should not have it, or what should we do about such and such a problem involving weaponry or military sales, or something like that.

Q: At the end of these three years, you were sent to other areas. You were sent to Barbados in 1973.

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. I went out to Barbados and we were in the West Indies for about three years.

Q: You were an economic officer, I gather?

FEATHERSTONE: I was an economic officer. I took the economic course, the economics course as they called it, at FSI. I didn't know what I was going to do after that. Everybody was telling me that it was good to get into the economic sphere of thing. So, I took the economics course. Unlike a lot of my colleagues, I had had a fair amount of Mathematics and what not, so I didn't have much trouble with the course.

Q: Was this a six-month course?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, a six-month course.

Q: That was intensive.

FEATHERSTONE: It was a very intense course. Actually, it was a very good course. It was one of the better things the department did, I think. Luckily, even though I had flunked out of pre-med long ago, I still retained the math and science. It took me through the ECON course somewhat more easily than some of my colleagues.

Q: How large was the embassy in Barbados?

FEATHERSTONE: Very small. We had myself, and I think about four other officers.

Q: Plus the ambassador.

FEATHERSTONE: Plus the ambassador.

Q: Wasn't it Eileen Donovan?

FEATHERSTONE: No. She was later. Oh, wait a minute, I'm trying to determine when Eileen came along. Eileen was first, I guess. You are right. It was Eileen and then it was a black fellow, Theodore Roosevelt Brittan. He was originally from South Carolina, or someplace like that. But, he had lived in New York for the past 20, 30 years. Anyway, he was the ambassador. He was a dreadful man. He had three or four women come in, accusing him of being the father of their illegitimate children.

Q: Barbadian women?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. He was the ambassador. I think that is when I started to take

another look at the Foreign Service, and what was happening to it. I didn't like what I was seeing. Anyway, this guy was venal, corrupt, a liar, among other things.

Q: Not really the best recommendations for an ambassador, let me say. Wasn't this known before he became the ambassador?

FEATHERSTONE: Pretty much. Certainly, the Barbadians knew it. The head of state, the prime minister tried to get rid of him. I don't know whether the department was trying to show their stuff, but they didn't. They left him there. The result is the relations we had with Barbados were terrible, awful.

Q: Were you the only economic officer or did you have any assistance there?

FEATHERSTONE: I was the only economic officer as such. We had a couple of consular officers. We had one or two cultural types, USIS types. But, yes I was the only economic officer.

Q: There was certainly a DCM?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. The DCM was... Gosh, I can't remember.

Q: It doesn't matter, as long as there was a DCM there. Was the embassy limited only to the island of Barbados or did you have other territories?

FEATHERSTONE: The embassy on Barbados was accredited to seven of the windward islands, including some famous ones, such as Grenada. These were places we visited. As the economic officer, I visited all of them regularly. My favorite happened to be Grenada. But, I knew the leaders and most of the people who were in these various islands fairly well. They had their own agendas in a way. They were looking for development. They were looking for more tourism. They were looking for handouts in the United States, but they didn't get them. We weren't giving them at the time, and weren't about to. That was one of the problems. We always had to dampen down expectations that they might get something out of us. That is another quibble I had with Brittan. He was always making statements to the effect of "Someday, we are really going to let you have what you need to put your country in high gear." It was never going to happen.

Q: Promises, promises.

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. He wanted to make them feel good.

Q: What were your main problems as economic officer there?

FEATHERSTONE: Theodore Roosevelt Brittan.

Q: I see. That answers that one. Were there any problems with drugs at the time?

FEATHERSTONE: There were some drugs. Some of the consular people that I talked with, would speak of Americans getting in trouble with drugs and what not. I don't think it was a great big deal, though. It was mostly pot, smoking it and that sort of thing. I don't think people were heavily into it. As I understand, people are now, down in the Caribbean. You are liable to get yourself blown away because they have all kinds of traffic.

Q: It wasn't a route for drugs to the U.S. or anything?

FEATHERSTONE: No. It was not. I never got too much involved with the drug stuff, other than talking to some of the consular people, who came across it. I remember when I was a consular officer, getting involved in it a couple times, because people were smoking pot. But, in Japan, you can get seven years for pot. So, it is a big deal. We would have these people come in and say, "Gee, this is the only time I ever smoked pot. I have never done this in my life before." You find out, later on, that this is their tenth time up or something like that.

Q: Did you get any Congressional visits to Barbados?

FEATHERSTONE: I think we had a couple, not many though. I think we had one or two. I can't even remember who they were. There were no big problems, as I recall. I think some of them just came down here because it was a nice place to be.

Q: During the winter, yes.

FEATHERSTONE: But, they came down and we always entertained them, of course. We took them around to see things. We had a small naval base in Barbados, a U.S. naval base. I believe, it was sort of a listening type of thing, where electronically, they would tune in on various places and what not. Then, we had maybe 10 or a dozen naval personnel there.

Q: I wanted to ask you about naval visits, whether you had any.

FEATHERSTONE: I don't think we had many naval visits. As I say, we had this naval group there. Of course, we saw them all the time, and were friends with them. They had a little commissary, or PX, what have you. We used to be able to use that.

Q: In the embassy field, did the Department pay much attention to Barbados?

FEATHERSTONE: No, they didn't pay much attention at all, except when Brittan's antics got them into some kind of trouble. They took a stand on that.

Q: Was there any Cuban influence, at the time, on the island?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. Later on, there was. As a matter of fact, after I left, they had a thing where they were going to get flights to Cuba landing in Barbados. There was a big

outry about that. Britain, of course, claimed that it was his doing that got that squelched. I don't think it was he, but they did finally get that back on track. There was no presence there.

Q: How were we Americans regarded by the Barbadians, in general?

FEATHERSTONE: Well, most of the Bajans, as they call themselves, would like to be in the United States. As a matter of fact, many of them were. They would get a visa and once they got a visa and got to New York, they had relatives there. They would stay there, of course. I don't blame them, what the hell. I would do the same thing myself if I were in Barbados. That is probably how my ancestors came from some far off village.

Q: All of ours did. Did we give any military assistance to Barbados?

FEATHERSTONE: Not when I was there, although we did later on, after I left. We got very interested in it. Of course, this was after Grenada and all these things happened. They started, big time, giving Barbados some weaponry, and military training. Things that were never thought of before. That was after my time there.

Q: Well, at the end of that tour, you were back in the Department and back in the Political Military Bureau. Did you request that assignment?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. I liked political-military work. I liked dealing with the military. I spent a lot of time in the military myself and I like military people. I get along very well with them. I liked the issues. The issues, to me, were more exciting. It was economic work, that sort of thing.

Q: What did you do in this reincarnation, back then?

FEATHERSTONE: Let me see. Where are we now?

Q: 1975 to 1978. Your second tour. After two years, you were moving out of Barbados?

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. We left Barbados in 1975 and I went back to an economic job in the Department. I worked on a number of economic things. As I recall, it is not too clear in my mind, but I was not terribly excited by this job. I was sort of marking time, I believe.

Q: You didn't think it was going to lead anywhere.

FEATHERSTONE: No, I didn't think it was going to lead anywhere. It wasn't fascinating, or you weren't dealing with great affairs of State, or anything like that.

Q: Did you notice any change when the Carter administration took over from the Ford administration, and the personnel all changed?

FEATHERSTONE: There were a lot of changes when the Carter administration took over. They changed USIS to... Instead of USIS, it became something, Information Agency. Anyway, they made some cosmetic changes that didn't really account for very much. There were some other minor changes. The Carter people were nice to deal with. They were very pleasant. They were southern, kind of laid-back people. I owe Jimmy Carter a great deal. He made me a Republican.

Q: Well, he did that for a lot of people. After your three years there, you were apparently anxious to get back into Japanese affairs?

FEATHERSTONE: I was. I had spent so much time in Japan and put in so much effort on it that I always felt like I was accomplishing more when I was dealing with the Japanese. It helps if you are dealing with an area that you know very well. It is always easiest in dealing with problems, and in approaching them.

Q: Well, in 1978, they found an assignment for you, I gather, in Tokyo?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. We were in Tokyo in 1978. I was a political-military officer again. We had bought our house in Arlington, Virginia not too long before that, in 1976, which is the house we are in now. My daughters were, at that time, in high school. Anyway, we had a good situation with my kids.

Q: They were able to accompany you to Japan?

FEATHERSTONE: They accompanied us to Japan, that is right, until they graduated from college, of course. I mean, until they entered college.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time? Was it Mike Mansfield?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, it was Mike Mansfield.

Q: Since you weren't doing a full new job, how large was the political-military unit in the embassy?

FEATHERSTONE: It wasn't very large. As a matter of fact, it was three people, counting myself.

Q: To whom did you report?

FEATHERSTONE: I reported to the political counselor.

Q: Depending on the problem.

FEATHERSTONE: Depending on the problem, yes.

Q: Did you have American military officers assigned to your office?

FEATHERSTONE: No. We dealt regularly with the military, but there was no officer assigned to our office.

Q: What were the major problems you had to deal with in those years?

FEATHERSTONE: These were the Carter years. It was mostly getting used to the style and to the stipulations of the Carter administration. There were some ups and downs, of course. I didn't have all that many serious problems facing me, in terms of political-military or economics, at that time. It took a long time to get used to the Carter's people way of doing things. I think I said before, they changed USIS a lot, which made USIS people quite unhappy. It was a situation of getting our feet on the ground, after the Carter people came in.

Q: You had been away from Japan for about 10 years when you went back. How did the country change, or did you notice many significant changes?

FEATHERSTONE: It had changed a lot. There was a lot more growth. When I first saw Japan in the late 1940s, it was in ruins. Later on, things became better. Then, they became better than ever before. Now, Japan was rich. It's like a John Updike thing: rabbit was rich. We finally got to the stage where Japan was rich, and they were outstripping us, in terms of finery. You saw it in the buildings. They had these fancy buildings going up, and all sorts of things. We didn't have the money anymore to compete on that scale, which was putting big projects up that would impress people, that sort of thing. Not that we didn't do it for that reason. Japan began to feel its power, I guess. The fact that they had so much money, they had a great deal of influence. It was somewhat more difficult to deal with them because they thought we ought to confide in them more or do things their way more often. This is quite natural. That is the state of the world.

Q: Political-military... Did you get involved in the sales of our airplanes to Japan?

FEATHERSTONE: No, I didn't really. Mostly, the military people did that. We had a military affairs' office. There was, I think, a Army colonel and all the military aircraft sales were in his purview. They kept me advised and used to come to me with various ideas on who would be a good fellow to approach or something like that. I would help them out. In that sense, I was involved, but I wasn't the one who made decisions on that course.

Q: Well, while you were in Tokyo, there were several visits from the Defense Secretary, Brown. Were you involved in those?

FEATHERSTONE: I was, indeed. I was the control officer for Brown. In fact, he sent me a nice note one time. There was a friend of mine who was a colonel in the United States Air Force. He was actually the control officer of Brown, I think. I was there as a State Department political-military officer. If I recall this correctly, the Japanese interpreter was supposed to be there, but he wasn't there. So, here they were with Brown. So, they

dragged me in, and I did the interpreting for Brown for about a two-hour session. Somebody wrote a nice letter to me from him; I think it was Dave Lohman. He was an Air Force colonel who was a good friend of mine.

Q: I think President Carter also visited Japan during the time you were there.

FEATHERSTONE: He did. I went to one of the cocktail parties. I was not involved in the visits, myself. I did go to the reception, though. I remember being there. The Carter people were unusual. They had a laid back, southern style, quite different from what I was used to.

Q: Could you see Japan emerging as a military power or partner for us in the Far East?

FEATHERSTONE: I think it is unlikely. Although memories are now fading, the defeat was very traumatic. Everything was leveled. I remember being in Japan when I was a kid in 1947. There was nothing standing. It was a complete devastation. I remember that pretty vividly. I can't see getting in the military. There is sort of a psyche resistance to military stuff with the Japanese. They have a terrible time recruiting people. People won't join. It is very difficult. I just don't see Japan getting into the major military business.

Q: What about the scandal, I guess you would call it, of the bribery of Japanese officials by American companies such as Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas, and others?

FEATHERSTONE: Well, you know, this happens. It has happened with probably every nation. I recall, I guess it was the Germans who had something with Siemens in the early 1900s. It happens all the time. I am not condoning it. This is not something that is out of the blue. Of course, one ought to take measures to prevent this sort of thing, and of course, punish those who are obviously overstepping their bounds. Corruption in Japan, like in the United States, is nothing new. They have a lot of stuff, a lot of payoffs on things. Lockheed was one of the big ones. I think former Prime Minister Tanaka was involved in that. I met Tanaka several times. He was from Niigata. Of course, I had been assigned there. I met him several times in Niigata. He knew that I was a Foreign Service officer. I always used to chat with him when I saw him. He was a tough guy. He was nobody to fool with. He came to an unfortunate end, I think. He could have done good things for Japan, and in some ways, he did. He could have been much more effective if he hadn't rubbed so many people the wrong way, and gotten involved with others who were corrupt. I don't think he was a bad person himself, but I think he was always in bad company.

Q: This can happen. Were you involved in forcing Japan to increase its military spending?

FEATHERSTONE: That was always something that was on the table for us. It was an objective that we always had in mind. We were always congratulating Japan or encouraging Japan in things that they did that would increase our readiness and theirs, of course. There is a limit as to how much you can push. Of course, when you are dealing

with a nation that was controlled by military authorities for about 1,000 years, you don't want to push too heavily. We didn't press them. We certainly complimented them and tried to show our appreciation, which we thought was the right thing.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about the problems we had with our nuclear arms ships trying to come in, the Midway and others?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. Japan has a terrible, what they call a "nuclear allergy," being the only nation that suffered two A-bombs. They were really traumatized by this. My own feeling is that the A-bombs saved Japan, because if we ever had to invade Japan, it would have been house-to-house fighting. Everything would have been destroyed, just like all the places in Europe. It would have been rubble. I don't know whether you are aware of this, but we never bombed most of Japan. We bombed some of the military area.

Q: In Tokyo.

FEATHERSTONE: We heavily fire bombed Tokyo. In fact, the fire bombs in Tokyo killed more people than the A-bomb did, far more. We never bombed a lot of stuff, including the largest dry dock in the world, which we are still using.

Q: You made the point. They may have had something in mind.

FEATHERSTONE: There is a lot of stuff in Japan like that. We reserved and saved, and Japan was able to recover all that much faster. They had all their power plants. That would not have been the case if we had bombed them to smithereens.

Q: It wasn't the case in Germany.

FEATHERSTONE: They had all the railroads too. Japan has a massive railroad network. That was all there, and still is. All you had to do was start it up. Everything was going again. That is one of the reasons Japan was able to recover so quickly. The Japanese people, of course, are hardworking and all that. Without that, it would have been 20, 30 more years.

Q: Were you involved in many demonstrations?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. We had quite a few. As the Vietnam War heated up, there were more and more of them. As I say, they were never violent. I don't think we ever had any kind of violence. But, there was chanting, and they would wave banners and flags. People would approach you and say, "Get out of Vietnam," even if that was the only English they could manage.

Q: Were you there for Secretary Weinberger's visit?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, several of Weinberger's visits. He made more than one. Of all the people that I dealt with, he was by far the most pleasant and easiest. I also think he

was one of the smartest. I received a nice letter from him too. Weinberger was a very fine fellow.

Q: Well, after these four years in Tokyo, you went to Okinawa.

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, I went as consul general this time.

Q: The island had been reverted to Japan.

FEATHERSTONE: The island was reverted to Japan in 1972. I was the consul general. Of course we had, and always had, a large military establishment there. I think we had the biggest air base in the world, in terms of runways.

Q: That is what consuls general pride themselves on, I think.

FEATHERSTONE: I am a big scuba diver. Some of the best scuba diving in the world is off Okinawa. I spent almost every spare minute that I could, scuba diving. I was diving all the time, except when the weather wouldn't permit it, of course. A bunch of the Air Force fellows and the Marines were with me on this. We used to hire a boat and put about 40 people on. You could probably get 60 people on board, but we didn't have that many. We would go out every weekend, weather permitting, on this boat. We would go to other offshore islands, and anchor the boat, and go diving. It was one of the best times in my life, honest to God.

Q: How large was your staff?

FEATHERSTONE: I had about six or seven people. Some of them are still around, up in Tokyo now.

Q: Oh, it doesn't matter.

FEATHERSTONE: I had a number of associates and friends at the time. It was one of the best times of my life. I wrote regular reports on local events, conditions, people, etc. and sent these to the DCM, who was my boss at that time. I don't know whether that information was of much use to anyone, but my Okinawa sojourn was certainly one of the happiest times of my life.

Q: Did the ambassador visit you very often?

FEATHERSTONE: The Ambassador came down once or twice.

Q: Who was it at the time?

FEATHERSTONE: Ambassador Mike Mansfield (Big Mike).

Q: What was the attitude of the Okinawans?

FEATHERSTONE: The Okinawans have always liked Americans. We came there after the war. Everything was obliterated, because of the war. We came there and helped people. We saved the lives of many people with sulphuric drugs, medicines and so forth. They have always liked Americans. They hate the Japanese.

Q: That is interesting. I never heard this before.

FEATHERSTONE: The Okinawans came under Japanese control in 1609 when the Japanese took Okinawa. It was a terrible, harsh rule and the Okinawans had a miserable time of it. Everything was the death penalty. The Japanese were really tough guys. There is no question. They were massively brutal.

Q: Cruel?

FEATHERSTONE: Very cruel. Anyway, the Okinawans always liked us. We were their saviors when we came in after World War II, because we helped them. Even with all the demonstrations and everything we had, they were always tempered... They never called us names. They were never spiteful toward us.

Q: What were your relations as consul general with the American military?

FEATHERSTONE: Very good. I spent some time in the military myself, so I was simpatico with a lot of them. They were all conservatives, which I am.

Q: You also didn't have the big problem of reversion, which you had your first tour out there.

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. It was all over with. It was a great thing. For years, the U.S. military thought reversion would be terrible, because they would lose all their influence, because they wouldn't be able to fly all these missions. But, they were able to do all that and more. In fact, the Japanese paid for a lot of this stuff, actually. It was cheaper having been reverted. It turned out to be much better for the U.S. and much better for Japan.

Q: Did you have any visitors from this country, out to Okinawa?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. We always had whoever the ambassador was, or the chief guy involved in Military Affairs, would come out. They would make regular visits.

Q: I have only been at the airport. When we landed there, they had us pull down the curtains on our plane, so we couldn't see anything. This was back in the 1950s.

FEATHERSTONE: It's just beautiful. The people are very nice, too.

Q: Did you at the consulate have to deal with this problem of crimes by the U.S. military

out there?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes. You probably have read about, more recently, the rape of two 12-year-olds by a Marine and a sailor. When I was there, a taxi driver was killed for four bucks, or something like that. How can somebody do something like that? Killing somebody for four bucks. Killing somebody anyway is awful, but I mean, for four bucks. I remember having to go to the funeral for this guy and a woman broke down and said bad things to me about the United States. That was unpleasant.

Q: I imagine that was an unpleasant duty. Did we still have a problem with atomic weapons out there?

FEATHERSTONE: Not too much. We took most of the nukes out of there by that time. We took the poison gas out. There wasn't too much there except 21,000 Marines and all their tanks, and all that stuff. The Navy didn't have very much there. The Navy used to send ships in every now and then, but I don't think there was a presence there. There was one naval officer, a senior officer, on the staff.

Q: As you were leaving there, what was your view of Okinawa's future? Do you think it will continue as a happy base for us?

FEATHERSTONE: Well, yes, I think it will continue. Okinawa is a very poor area. It hasn't anything to recommend it except tourism. It has wonderful beaches, but they don't make anything there and there are no resources, such as oil. There are no natural resources. The only thing they have is tourism, a beautiful island, and some wonderful places to snorkel dive, swim. The economic prospects aren't very good. I think most likely the Japanese will continue to support them in various ways, financially.

Q: Subsidized. Yes.

FEATHERSTONE: Subsidize things by providing money for power plants and that sort of thing. I don't think anything is going to happen that will disturb that because the Okinawans certainly don't want that to happen, and I don't think we do either. I think if it is going to continue, then okay. They will never love having American bases there, but they put up with it. Of course, they reap a lot of economic benefits from the bases, by way of selling things. So, it is not altogether bad. I don't anticipate that there will be any great problems in Okinawa.

Q: After those four happy years, you came back to Washington and were assigned to the Board of Examiners of the Foreign Service.

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. I worked with Bruce Flatin. Do you know him?

Q: No, I don't know him, but I know of him.

FEATHERSTONE: And Paul Canny.

Q: Yes, I know him.

FEATHERSTONE: I worked with Paul Canny, Bruce, and those people on the Board of Examiners. I thought it was kind of a fun job. It was interesting seeing all these candidates come in. You put various questions to them and so forth, and see how they do. I enjoyed it.

Q: Where did you do your examining, here, or did you travel?

FEATHERSTONE: Both. We did most of the actual examining right in the FSI building, right in the complex there. I went to Los Angeles, and I went to Atlanta a couple times. We had these things where we would go around and give the Foreign Service test. I usually traveled with one or two other people. I really enjoyed that. I thought it was great stuff. In fact, I went to Los Angeles. I had always been told that Los Angeles was terrible. My mother was from New York and she thought that nobody would ever go to Los Angeles for any reason. Anyway, I went down there and found it quite delightful. Of course, it is a college town, with UCLA, USC, a lot of things catering to young people there. It was very cheap. I had a terrific time there. I thought the food was great, California stuff. I thought it was tremendous. I was ashamed that I ever thought badly about Los Angeles.

Q: Were you under any affirmative action pressure when taking in candidates?

FEATHERSTONE: I, personally never took somebody because of the color of their skin, or whatever. If we got somebody who was black, or Hispanic or something like that, who was good, we were happy about that.

Q: You weren't told to pass a quota or anything?

FEATHERSTONE: I don't recall ever being told to pass a quota. We had our doubts about some people who came in, who didn't go through us. They were coming into the service and we often were puzzled how they got to be there. They obviously were not real material for the Foreign Service.

Q: Were you getting good candidates, from those you examined?

FEATHERSTONE: Got some good ones and got some bad ones. Most of the ones we found were qualified and were quite good.

Q: How do you compare them with those who started in your class, back in 1961?

FEATHERSTONE: I would have to say that they were not as good. I don't think their education was as good. I don't think their life experience was necessarily good. When I came in, almost everyone had been in the armed forces. That helps a lot too. Right away, you are used to dealing with military. At least you know a little bit about what the

military training is like.

Q: And accepting discipline, too.

FEATHERSTONE: Accepting discipline, that's right. If somebody tells me you are my superior, there is no fog in my mind about it. You might say, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, I don't think that is the right course," for instance. You can obviously do that. But, if somebody who was my superior gave me an order, I obeyed it without question. I'm not too sure that is the case anymore. Maybe that is a good thing, and maybe that is a bad thing. There are particular times when you need that sort of thing.

Q: Then in 1987, you retired. Any particular reason for your retirement then?

FEATHERSTONE: Time in class.

Q: Well, that answers all questions.

FEATHERSTONE: I wasn't promoted. I got a contract with the Department. I was working in a classified situation involving simulations for DOD and State.

Q: Well, that can be interesting.

FEATHERSTONE: Oh, it was fascinating. We did things like, "What do you do if nerve gas is introduced to downtown Washington, DC? Whom do you call and what actions do you take to deal with it?" We were able to, by simulations of this type, develop procedures whereby you notify this person first, at this place, second, and what not.

Q: Not call 911.

FEATHERSTONE: Not call 911, no. This is all classified. I enjoyed it. Basically, I am a kid at heart, and I love make believe.

Q: Well, after six years, then you were recalled to service.

FEATHERSTONE: Recalled to service to run the FSI Japanese language school in Yokohama.

Q: I think it is quite a feather in your cap if they brought you back for that.

FEATHERSTONE: I did that for five years.

Q: 1993 to 1998?

FEATHERSTONE: Yes.

Q: You went to Yokohama as Director of Japanese Area and Language Training, which

is an important outfit, which you were a graduate of, I gather.

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. I graduated from the school in 1965.

Q: How large was the center when you took it over?

FEATHERSTONE: We had about 18 to 20 students at the time, something like that. These are not only Americans, but we had New Zealanders and Australians. We had a few people from other agencies, a couple students. But we trained them in Japanese for one year.

Q: I was going to say, is it a two-year course or one year?

FEATHERSTONE: It is a two-year course, but we gave them the second year. The first year they went elsewhere. The first year they were in New Zealand, Australia, or FSI/Washington. We would get them the second year.

Q: Were you funded adequately to do your job?

FEATHERSTONE: I want to say that you can always use more funding. We had enough money to do our job. There were certain things we didn't have enough of. We could have used some more text books. We could have used some more tape recorders, that sort of thing, but we had a sufficient number to do the job. We certainly were not hurting.

Q: What were your relations with the embassy?

FEATHERSTONE: Well, we were 25 miles away from the embassy, so they were pretty good. The farther the better.

Q: Did you get any visits from the ambassador or any other senior officers there?

FEATHERSTONE: Senior officers, yes. I'm not sure that the ambassador ever came down, frankly. I think we invited him two or three times, but... I think it was Mike then.

Q: It was Foley, I think, then.

FEATHERSTONE: Maybe it was Foley.

Q: He must have come during your period there.

FEATHERSTONE: He probably came at the end of my period, but I don't think he was around very much when I was there. It was right toward the end, I think, when Foley came. I think that was one of the areas where we could have used more visits from higher level people just to get some visibility, and give the students a chance to talk with them. I don't think we had enough high-level visits. I must say that I had a good time there. It was a well-run operation.

Q: So, I gather that you think this Japanese language school is a very good investment for the U.S.

FEATHERSTONE: The only way that you will be able to train language officers... Well, not the only way, you could send someone to college in Japan and so forth, but that requires even greater knowledge of Japanese, before you can do that. There are people now coming into the Foreign Service who have been to Japanese universities. They come in with far greater language skills than the people we train.

Q: Oh, you mean they have actually studied in Japan?

FEATHERSTONE: Exactly. Some of them have Japanese mothers, or something like that, but many of them are coming in with substantial language skills. This is a very good thing. But, of course, many of them won't come into the Foreign Service, necessarily when they get these language skills. They may rather go to a big company, or whatever.

Q: Are we getting enough candidates in these Japanese language schools, or not?

FEATHERSTONE: Well, being away from it, I can't say, Tom. It's hard for me to give you a real good answer on that. I have been away too long. I don't know. I suspect not because those who go to Japanese universities and acquire really good Japanese language skills probably aren't going to come to the Foreign Service. It is a real problem. I think you always need a cadre of Japanese language officers. The question is what is the best way to get that. You can seek out these people who have studied abroad or you can try to train them yourself. You will probably always need a training facility for Japanese for a long time to come, I think.

Q: What was the quality of the American students you had in the training center?

FEATHERSTONE: Pretty good. Some of the top students we had were New Zealanders or Australians, but we had some good Americans also. They were pretty careful about the people they selected. On the whole, I can't say they would get duds, not in that program.

Q: Did you have any big problems in those years, or not?

FEATHERSTONE: No, it was supported pretty well. Like a lot of places, we could have always used more money for this, that and the other thing, but I wouldn't say there were problems that hampered our operation. We were funded pretty well.

Q: Well, at the end of that period, in 1998, retirement came to you again.

FEATHERSTONE: That's right. I forget whether that was the second or third time I retired, but this time I made it stick.

Q: Tell me, before we end, what are your thoughts on the Foreign Service as a career?

FEATHERSTONE: I had a pretty good time myself. I enjoyed it. I met a lot of people that I liked. When I joined it, it was an elite organization. That is one of the reasons I joined it, as a matter of fact. I felt proud and happy to be in it. I can't say that I feel that way today. I'm not sure that is what we are getting today, that is good, quality people, from what I have seen. Of course, I have been away from it for a while.

Q: You had an intense specialization.

FEATHERSTONE: Probably too much so, yes.

Q: I wanted to ask what you thought about that?

FEATHERSTONE: It is not a good thing. If you want to rise in the Foreign Service, you don't want to get into a hard language area. Japanese, for instance, takes about 25 years to get the language where you can operate in it as necessary, and interpret on a fairly high level, and so forth. That is a long time to spend in language training. You can't deal with that sort of thing in a normal way, by bringing people in. It takes too damn long. The future of the Foreign Service, from what I have seen, in terms of the people that get in, and how they are getting them. My impression is that there are a lot of people coming in who are not as well qualified. They are not as well qualified as they should be. They are not the cream of the crop.

Q: I think it is fair to say that they aren't quite as motivated as we were in our time. They don't seem to want to stay the course for 30 years, or so.

FEATHERSTONE: Yes, but Tom, we never had things happen before, such as people selling visas.

Q: Oh, yes we did.

FEATHERSTONE: Or getting sexual favors.

Q: Well, they weren't publicized, but I was sent to Hong Kong to replace a man who was in Leavenworth prison because he had been selling passports and visas. This was in 1956.

FEATHERSTONE: Oh really. I never heard of these things.

Q: I know. They weren't well publicized, but there it was.

FEATHERSTONE: You have a lot of stuff now that just curls my hair. To think that somebody would actually do that in the Foreign Service, or in the U.S. military. If you did that before, you would get thrown in Leavenworth so fast, it would make your swim. It's just a different world, I guess.

Q: It is. It is a different world, perhaps different people running it. We will see. I want to thank you very much, Ed.

FEATHERSTONE: I hope it has been useful, Tom. I don't know if it was.

Q: Well, I certainly think it will be, and you will have a chance to go over it.

FEATHERSTONE: Oh, sure.

Q: This is Tom Dunnigan signing off on September 20, 1999, after my interview with Ed Featherstone.

End of interview